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# Tennyson's Treatment of Women as Revealed in His Poetry

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# TENNYSON'S TREATMENT OF WOMEN AS REVEALED IN HIS POETRY

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To my niece, Gwendolyn Faye Owens

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# INTRODUCTION

Tennyson, if not absolutely the greatest, was at least the most representative poet of his age. As a poet, Tennyson was sensitive to the influences of the nineteenth century, reflected the movements of the period and felt a poet's sympathy with the various phases of life. The problems most interesting were those which concerned the development and destiny of mankind.[1]

It has been said that no other poet of the nineteenth century exceeds Tennyson as a poetic artist, for Tennyson paints with words, vivid portraits of women whom the poet often took from the world about him. What first attracted readers to Tennyson, as to Shakespeare, was the character of his women---pure, gentle, refined beings whom one must revere. Tennyson, in portraying his women, quite often sets forth many truths; for his theme, so characteristic of his age, is the reign of law and order. No other poet of the nineteenth century has demonstrated the art of depicting women with such singleness of purpose as Tennyson does. Tennyson loved one woman (his mother) supremely and her love made clear the meaning of all life.[2]

A study of Tennyson's poems written in earlier manhood reveals

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[1]William H. Crawshaw, The Making of English Literature, (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1907) p. 398.

[2]William J. Long, English Literature, Its History and Its Significance for the Life of the English Speaking World, (Dallas: Ginn and Company, 1909) pp. 467-68.

women whose attractiveness is transient and external, whereas his poetry of maturer years reflects intellectual power and noble qualities of heart and virtues that endure. The woman that Tennyson conceives is the divinely purifying type that elevates all human life. Tennyson has portrayed women of wondrous virtue, beauty and love. One finds that Tennyson is a seeker and a portrayer of beauty, and he is an artist and moralist, verifying and intensifying the well known features of the good. The poet is the artist of woman and of the moral beauties that relate to her. To Tennyson women make and unmake men and kingdoms.[3]

Tennyson possessed rare gifts. The poet loved to deal with old ideas, but before he would use the ideas, the ideas had to yield a human gem---a lesson. Often great truths are found half-hidden under the most commonplace passages. The poet's purpose is to connect the truth with the flowing current of life and directly show its relation to the present. In his treatment of women, Tennyson has so mastered the old culture that one can use it as a spectacle through which to read all times and different developments of human nature, for the poet is a mixture of rudeness, sincerity, sensitiveness, honesty, belief and disbelief. But he is true to what he does see of the truth. The picture that the poet paints is not without the thought. It is Tennyson's reverence for womanhood that affords a key to his mind and the quality of his genius.[4]

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[3]W. J. Dawson, The Makers of English Poetry, (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1906) p. 206.

[4]Alexander H. Japp, Three Great Teachers of Our Time, (London: Smith Elder and Company, 1865) pp. 87-186.

The writer in this study proposes to make a literary analysis of specific poems to determine Tennyson's manner of portraying women characters and to discover the influences that affected the poet's treatment of women.

It is presumed that this study will afford information for teachers and students of English. The writer hopes that the reader of the study will be motivated to make a further study of Tennyson's portrayal of other women characters. The data are intended to provide material for comparing Tennyson's portrayal of women with other poets' portrayal of women.

The study includes a political and social background of Tennyson's treatment of women, biographical data of the poet, reverence for his mother, his interest in the Arthurian legends and classical poetry. The study includes women characters who are depicted in the following poems: The Princess, Godiva, To the Queen 1851 and The Miller's Daughter. Included also are women portrayed in The Idylls of the King, namely: Guinevere, Enid and Elaine.

In developing the study, the writer proposes to show that Tennyson in his treatment of women reveals his political and social philosophy pertinent to the problems of his day.

The writer assumes that certain influences affected Tennyson in his portrayal of women characters---reverence for his mother, his boyhood environment, his interest in romantic and classical poetry and the Industrial Revolution. It is further assumed that the effects of the above mentioned influences are apparent in the women characters that Tennyson treats.

For clarity the writer deems it necessary to define the word "Treatment" as it relates to this study. The word "Treatment" simply means Tennyson's "manner, method or way of portraying" his women characters.

In the pages that follow, the writer will discuss those poems in which women characters reveal Tennyson's political and social philosophy representative of the age in which the poet lived and wrote.

# CHAPTER I

## A POLITICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF TENNYSON'S TREATMENT OF WOMEN

In order to understand Tennyson's treatment of women characters, a knowledge of the political and social conditions that existed in England during the time in which Tennyson lived and wrote is essential. One must have some conception of the conditions that prevailed in eighteenth and nineteenth century England.

In 1700 most of the people of England depended on agriculture for a living. But even as early as 1750 many of the farmers' wives had begun to feel the corroding desire for the brooches, rings, silks, pewter cups and other wares that the farmers could purchase from travelling peddlers, only for the money. To secure the money, the farmer might take advantage of the market in a neighboring town and produce a certain surplus for sale there, or he might allow his wife and children to be drawn into the orbit of town and industry as domestic workers. Export demand was a significant factor in the eighteenth century. In 1767 James Hargreaves invented the spinning jenny which revolutionized the cloth-making industry. As a result of the invention of the spinning jenny, the villages became less agricultural than formerly. The wives and families of yeomen and agricultural laborers carried on various branches of manufacture in their cottages. Spinning was the special task of women and children. By 1780 a machine had been invented that could spin two hundred threads at once. Later Watts' steam engine and other heavier machines were invented. The invention of machinery caused factories

to increase with tremendous rapidity. A vast number of workers was required to operate and maintain England's factories, and people began to flock to the cities to work in the factories. The juxtaposition of machines, the supplanted human skill, the steam engine, which replaced human energy, and the aggregation of workers produced the characteristic institution of the Industrial Revolution---the factory run by steam.[1]

Thus, one finds that the industrial and social developments of the eighteenth century set the stage for the political and social problems that developed in the nineteenth century.

By 1801, the beginning of the nineteenth century, a tremendous change was well under way in the occupational status of the people of England. The number of those dependent on agriculture had increased slightly, but the number of those dependent upon industry had advanced rapidly. In general there was the beginning of a shift from the land to the workshop which caused the development of new towns. The development of new towns created an enormous demand for all sorts of goods, houses, and furniture which brought about a greater rapidity of movement and a new haste in living. Among the country gentlemen, there was an improvement in manners, and even an attempt was made to ape the nobility. Every gentleman's lady was no longer content to remain at home preparing cordial waters and preparing salves and ointments for the poor. The gentle wife went up to London with the husband and enjoyed the comforts of London society. Among the tradesmen the desire for luxury was still more conspicuous

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[1]Frederick C. Dietz, A Political and Social History of England, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928) p. 403.

than among the gentry. Even the yeomen farmers acquired new wants rapidly, and the poorest classes improved their clothing through the use of cotton and linen. One of the most significant things about the industrial development, was the requirement of extensive capital to carry on industrial undertakings on a larger scale. This desire for capital brought about the "commercial greed" that Tennyson speaks so vehemently against in several of his poems dipicting women.[2]

A study of the political developments in England during the nineteenth century reveals that the Tories took charge of the government and were in office continuously until 1830. Throughout the Napoleonic Wars, there was little change, if any, in the basis of political representation in the House of Commons, apart from the admission of a few Irish members in 1801. As commercial wealth increased, a large number of financiers bought seats in Parliament.[3] In 1815 not even the new factory owners, nor the industrial employers had any pretension to be regarded as gentlefolk. The employers were too busy building up their capital in order to enlarge their establishments to spare much thought of politics. The capitalists gave no thought to politics until the turbulent years after 1815. The capitalists were too busy accumulating wealth. Although the capitalists were successful in gaining wealth, they soon became burdened with exorbitant taxes. When the Corn Law of 1815 was passed, the capitalists began to complain that the law allowed the landowners to escape

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[2] Ibid., pp. 407-415.

[3] Ibid., p. 131.

almost free.[4]

An example of injustice of taxes imposed at this time is seen in the portrayal of a woman depicted in the poem, Godiva (a poem that will be discussed later) in which a woman sacrificed her self-respect for the mothers and other people who came to her (Lady Godiva) clamouring against the heavy tax that was levied upon them by their lord, the Earl of Coventry. One notes that Tennyson sounds forth his voice in writing, making known to the world the suffering that exorbitant taxes bring to bear upon the poor.

While the rapid growth of economic organization was proceeding among the workers, the political reformers were gathering their force for a final struggle. For a few years after 1815 the old governing class had pursued the old methods of repression and ruled openly in the interest of the landed aristocracy. But this was possible only as long as the threat of revolt arising from the misery of the poor solidified the richer class behind the government as their defender. The rising class of merchants and industrial employers began more openly to express resentment at the economic policy designed to suit the interest of landowners, but calculated to hinder the growth of industry and commerce. The middle class began to clamour for a change of policy, and to agitate reform of Parliament as the only means of securing the reform.

Through the period 1830-1832 there was in Parliament a struggle between the "die-hards" and the moderates. The Whigs be-

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[4]G. D. H. Cole and Raymond Postgate, The British Common People, (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1939) pp. 134-169.

came more and more committed to a reform of the electoral system, but they did not mean to make Britain a democracy. The Tories, on the other hand, were against Parliamentary reform. They were divided. One section wanted to go on ruling the country the old way, ignoring the pretensions of the rew rich, but the second group held that the one chance of preventing electoral reform lay in a voluntary change of attitude on the part of the existing aristocracy. This group wanted the Tories to govern the country, and they hoped that, if the Tories showed themselves attentive to the needs of industry and commerce, the new rich would give up clamouring for a change in the constitution.[5]

The clashes between the Tories and the Whigs caused much unrest throughout England. The factory workers were in an unpleasant state of mind. Riots were frequent. The suffrage, extended by about half million in 1832, was still restricted by a heavy property qualification. The working people had not benefited, and during the late thirties and the forties the working class developed a program known as Chartism. Though the Charter was rejected by the House of Commons in 1839, and the consequent riots were easily suppressed, all six of the proposals of the Charter were later accepted.[6]

Tennyson did not believe in the riots that were frequent during the struggle for reform. The poet thought that the Chartists and Socialists agitation should be met, not by universal imprisonment

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[5] Ibid., pp. 221-22.

[6] John W. Bowyer and John L. Brooks, The Victorian Age, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1938) p. 7.

and repression, but by a widespread national education, by a more patriotic and less party spirit and by increased energy and sympathy among the social classes. Hallam Tennyson expresses his father's attitude in the following statement:

> The riots of the poor classes filled my father with a desire to help those who lived in misery. My father hated the narrow and ignorant Toryism found in country districts. He loathed parties and sects and sympathized with the misfortunes of his fellow-men.[7]

In the poem, Rizpah, Tennyson makes known the suffering and misery of the poor when he tells of the mother who wails the death of her son who has been shamefully hanged.

The question might be asked, what was the political status of women during the period of political unrest in England? Until the second half of the nineteenth century, women were not allowed any voice whatsoever in politics. However, later in the century when men were extended the right of suffrage, a great change in women's political status appeared. At first, marriage was women's sole aim of existence, and after marriage her property was entirely at the disposal of her husband. She could not make a contract nor engage in any business. Later women became, if not fully, partially the equal of men in ordinary civil rights such as property control.[8]

At the time of the second Reform Bill, the very mention of suffrage for women was received with so much mirth and ridicule that

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[7]Hallam Tennyson, Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir, Vol. II, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1897) pp. 142-45.

[8]Albert E. McKinley, et al., World History To-Day, (New York: American Book Company, 1929) p. 549.

the question of women suffrage was dismissed from court.[9]

In 1850 a national convention was held in Springfield, Massachusetts, for the purpose of discussing, among other things, woman's right to vote. The news of this convention was circulated in Britain by periodicals. Following the news of the convention, a widespread movement for woman's right to enfranchisement began in England. Men and women began to write and make speeches in behalf of woman's rights. One outstanding spokesman for woman's rights was John Stuart Mill. For sixty years after the Springfield, Massachusetts convention in America, men and women in England began to defend woman's cause in large numbers and as time went on people became convinced that only through politics could women help bring about the reforms so desirable in society. But woman's advance to the polls was not rapid.[10] It is in The Princess that Tennyson so beautifully unfurls his banner in the defense of woman's rights. The poem will be discussed later in a chapter that follows.

One finds that women's social status is even more deplorable than her political. The invention of machines and the establishment of factories changed woman's social position altogether. The various machines ushered in by the Industrial Revolution required little muscular strength on the part of the operators and as a result a great demand for child labor began. Skill and quickness could be found in the nimble hands of children. The demand for

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[9]Dietz, op. cit., p. 603.

[10]McKinley, op. cit., pp. 549-50.

child labor was often met by mothers who preferred to send their children to the factory rather than work themselves. In addition to children, numbers of women and men entered the factories, too. Women and children were compelled to work long hours in hot, dusty and unhealthy buildings. All too often, men, women and children were huddled together in tenements or shacks in the midst of the most unwholesome surroundings.[11] Tennyson makes mention of the sad condition of the factory worker in the following line:

> When the poor are hovell'd and hustl'd together, each like swine....[12]

Since many of the workers were fresh from the soil, ignorant and cut off from the traditional social restraints and the healthy out-door sports and occupations of their country environment, and unfettered by any sense of civic attachment, it was not unnatural that these workers should add to their wretchedness by drinking and by sexual excesses. The public house was their means of escape from the tedium of fourteen hours of tending a machine. Therefore, it is not astonishing to find that three-fourths of the girls and women who worked in the factory towns were unchaste.[13]

Whenever women and girls are subjected to low and immoral practices, society in general suffers. In addition to the un-

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[11] Ibid., p. 255.

[12] W. J. Rolfe, ed., The Complete Poetical Works of Tennyson, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1878) p. 199, l. 29.

[13] Dietz, op. cit., p. 37.

chastity of women and girls, the desire for wealth on the part of capitalists and financiers resulted in cheating, stealing, lying and various other forms of vice. During the nineteenth century many of the laws were lax and unjust, and as a result crime became numerous and moral corruption followed. England suffered much moral depravity.

Thus, one finds that Tennyson lived and wrote during a period of national emotion, for the nineteenth century was not static. It was dynamic! Therefore, it seems logical to assume that Tennyson's poems portraying women will reveal many of the poet's political and social views pertinent to the problems of his time.

## CHAPTER II

## INFLUENCES THAT AFFECTED TENNYSON'S TREATMENT OF WOMEN

### The Influence of His Parents

It is true that the political and social changes wrought by the Industrial Revolution affected Tennyson's treatment of women characters greatly, especially those portrayed in his poetry, but there are presumably other influences that may have had an even greater bearing upon the poet's portrayal of women.

A study of Tennyson's portrayal of women shows that the attributes of love and beauty dominate the poet's poetry depicting women. In reading many of Tennyson's poems, one need not think so much of the words employed, but think of the woman or women being portrayed. W. J. Dawson states that Tennyson's treatment of women can be traced to the early influences which surrounded his boyhood.[1] Even Tennyson's place of birth bears out Dawson's statement, for Alfred Tennyson was born in the quiet, remote village of Somersby in Lincolnshire, England, on August 6, 1809. Tennyson's father, the Reverend Clayton Tennyson, was a man of great height and emphatic appearance. Reverend Tennyson labored at times under a sense of injury because his rights to inheritance of property had been passed over in favor of a younger brother. Reverend Tennyson was a Hebrew

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[1]Dawson, op. cit., p. 200.

and Syriac scholar, a brilliant talker, by nature somewhat haughty and passionate, yet tender at heart beneath a native gruffness. There was in him something of the gloomy genius, strenuous, independence of character and erratic power. Reverend Tennyson, however, was large-minded and greatly gifted socially, but like many men of nervous temperament, he was subject to fits of despondency which led people often to mistake a worried moodiness for stern displeasure. With his boys, Reverend Tennyson was strict both as parent and school master, for he was well-read and his exact learning was balanced by a genial humanity. For his son's better instruction, Reverend Tennyson perfected his Greek, and his library, and he offered his sons a catholic selection of all that was most alive in English literature.[2] Thus, one finds that Tennyson inherited many of the qualities of his father.

If Alfred's father impressed his sons by learning, individuality and force of intellect, the mother was even more of an inspiration to the poet and his sisters and brothers. Tennyson's mother, whose maiden name was Miss Elizabeth Fycthe, was an example of tender, unassuming spirituality. More winning than her beauty was the purity and innocence of her personality. Naturally, one must conclude that Mrs. Tennyson's purity and innocence affected Tennyson greatly in his reverence for women. In later years Tenny-

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[2]Hugh L. Fausset, Tennyson, A Modern Portrait, (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1923) pp. 7-8.

son wrote that Mrs. Tennyson was a woman of keen insight, of quiet counsel and imbued with deep religious devotion. Mrs. Tennyson hated gossip and meanness. She was a lover of animals and always had a pity for wounded things. Though harassed by the cares of a large family of twelve children, Mrs. Tennyson did not fail to instill in her sons a spirit of gentleness and courtesy, a watchful reverence toward beauty and a spirit of sympathy with nature, which in all of her sons and particularly in Alfred took early root. To his mother Alfred owes his consistent passion for close observation of birds and nature's ways. Mrs. Tennyson brought an example of radiant docility into her home-life that influenced Alfred's ideal of womanhood for life. Toward his mother, Alfred was always tender and considerate, deferring in his judgments and opinions to her, and often Alfred was found reading poetry to Mrs. Tennyson in her room.[3]

A further study of Tennyson's mother shows that it was she who afforded one of the strongest keys to Tennyson's reverence for womanhood. Tennyson describes his mother as a woman with a beautiful and tender face, delicately molded, and emanating a spiritual radiance of sympathy and hope. Mrs. Tennyson is described as a sweet, gentle, and most imaginative woman. The qualities of this noble woman's character were inscribed indelibly upon Tennyson's mind in his early life. It was reverence for his mother that caused the poet to robe himself with the white flower of a blameless life which ruled him with a chivalrous regard for womanhood. Tennyson never knew anything

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[3]Ibid., pp. 8-9.

of the baser side of human life. The poet's love lyrics portray a picture of a calmly ordered home, where domestic love moved like a shining presence, with busy hands and a heart that was full of the tenderness of a pure devotion.[4]

Therefore, one finds that a study of the lives of Tennyson's parents gives a clearer insight into the poet's treatment of women. Perhaps it is from the father that Tennyson acquired his ability to write poetry and to paint with words beautiful portraits of women, for Reverend Tennyson was somewhat of a poet himself, and he urged his children to write poetry. From his mother Tennyson inherited those noble qualities of love, sympathy, a sense of beauty, purity and kindness. Throughout Tennyson's portrayal of women, one finds that the attributes of love and beauty prevail. Mrs. Tennyson was the key to Tennyson's reverence for womanhood. Although Tennyson speaks of his mother as being an unlearned woman, she was, nevertheless, gracious in her household ways, full of love an "angel breathing Paradise." Tennyson's reverence for his mother and for womanhood may be summed up in the following lines:

> ...Happy he with such a mother! Faith in womanhood
> Beats with his blood, and trust in all things high comes
> easy to him, and tho' he trip and fall
> He shall not blind his soul with clay.[5]

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[4]Dawson, op. cit., pp. 203-204.

[5]Rolfe, op. cit., p. 159, ll. 298-300.

## The Influence of Tennyson's Boyhood Environment, His Education and His Wife

Although Tennyson's reverence for his mother influenced him greatly, there was still another teacher outside the family circle that was almost as influential over the latent-poet in the boy as was his mother. This teacher was nature, for the poet learned the lessons from nature so well that for sixty years, syllables of its instruction were to be heard upon the lips of affectionate pupils. The Lincolnshire countryside was Tennyson's boyhood teacher, too. As a boy Tennyson could choose the wold, the marsh or the fen. Tennyson could seek the wooded hills rising out of deep valleys, their hollows filled with trees, where there was quietness, or he could choose the broad, rich fields of corn or pasture. Alfred loved the wold, or upland plains and the marsh. Here the poet loved to watch the buds unfold upon the lime, chestnut and sycamore. Here the boy, Alfred, observed the habits of robins or stood entranced by the nightingale singing in the leafy dusk beyond the high evergreen hedges that stood by his home. The beauty of the wolds with their broken lines of cliff and dale, their gushing waters, bowery lanes and overgrown villages, had a sumptuous quality that inspired Tennyson. The beauty of the marsh with its half-tones of color and allusive distances invited a gentle melancholy, a temperate joy, or a faint and spectral mysticism. It was in the lap of such country that Tennyson was nursed.[6]

Even the Rectory garden was a source of inspiration to the poet-

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[6]Fausset, op. cit., p. 17.

boy. The sloping lawn overshadowed by elm, larch and sycamores with walks of turf bordered by lilies, roses, hollyhocks and sunflowers were places of beauty and repose. Tennyson liked nothing better than to wander in the alleys and orchard where at dawn the apples would lie like golden globes in the dewy grass, no disagreeable sound would penetrate, only the familiar murmur of the brook, the vague voice of white kine, of sheep and of pigeons in the distant woods.[7]

Within the doors of Tennyson's home, too was comfortable intimacy, whether in the yellow-curtained, booklined drawing room, or in the Gothic vaulted dining room with its high ecclesiastical windows. The drawing room was the scene of many a family festivity. A certain studiousness, emanating probably from the father, brooded over the household and the children were apt and diligent to encourage each other in literary studies even in the adventure of authorship. The boys' games were rarely the physical expressions to which boyhood leisure is so commonly devoted. The games were rather the mimic enterprises of a romance in which the boys played their knightly part. The spell of Arthur was already upon Tennyson and his brothers. To this was added a passion for storytelling. Alfred was the kindest of the elder brothers to the younger children, and he spent countless hours telling stories to them or reading a romance tale. Fausset presents a family scene that shows Alfred with his little sister on his knee, with Arthur and Matilda sprawling against him on either side and the baby, Horatio, between his legs,

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[7]Ibid., p. 12.

and here the poet fascinated the children by reading to them legends of knights and heroes among untravelled forests rescuing distressed damsels from dragon, demon or witch. So, early did the Idylls of the King begin to germinate with Alfred.[8]

As one studies Tennyson's boyhood environment, one finds that the beauty of the wolds and the charm of the marshes and the mysteries of the Rectory garden were a source of inspiration to the poet, for Tennyson describes the beauty of the country in many of his poems, or he employs the wonders and beauty of nature for his setting in portraying his women characters.

In 1828 Charles and Alfred matriculated at Trinity College, Cambridge. Charged with no excessive idealism, Tennyson was disappointed in the poverty of ideas and prosaic logic-chopping of the doctors, proctors and deans at the college. Yet the friends whom Tennyson made while in Cambridge, who represented for him the whole Cambridge life were an intensely human and various set. Chief of the Cambridge friends was Arthur Hallam. Tennyson's friendship with Hallam became even closer when Hallam married Tennyson's sister, Emily. The death of Tennyson's father early in 1831 prevented Tennyson's getting a formal education.[9]

In the spring of 1830, when Arthur Hallam was staying at Somersby Rectory, a family named Sellwood drove over to call. One of the daughters, Emily, took a walk with Hallam in the Fairy Wood, and at a turn of the path the two came upon Tennyson. Emily was just

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[8]Ibid., p. 13.

[9]Ibid., pp. 41-42.

seventeen, graceful and slender in her simple grey dress. Emily seemed to move like a sun-shaft across the woodland rides. Tennyson asked whether Emily was a Dryad or an Oread that wandered there, for in her gentle delicacy she appeared to be a sister to one of the remote maidens rather than a human being. Twenty years passed before Tennyson changed this illusive picture for the homely treasure of a wife.[10]

According to R. Brimley Johnson, Tennyson and Emily married in 1850 at Shiplake. Tennyson said that it was the "nicest wedding he had ever been at," partly because the cake and dresses came too late. However, Tennyson added in all seriousness that "the peace of God" came into his life at the altar when he wedded Emily. The combination of a quiet humour, tender spirituality and practical devotion, with an intellect of which Tennyson was proud made Emily an ideal wife. Emily became the touchstone of all Tennyson's works, being the one and only critic for the final revision of the poet's poems before publication.[11]

A study of Tennyson's boyhood environment, his education and his ideal wife reveals that Tennyson was inspired by the above mentioned influences to a very large degree in his portrayal of women. Often Tennyson uses a scene taken from his boyhood memory to depict a setting in his poem. Although Tennyson did not have a formal education, he was well-learned, for he read widely. The works of great writers---living and dead---inspired Tennyson. Tenny-

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[10] Ibid., p. 38.

[11] R. Brimley Johnson, Tennyson and His Poetry, (London: George Harrap and Company, 1917) p. 63.

son re-created some of the stories that he read, and according to his own liking and style. Tennyson's wife was a source of inspiration, too, for the poem, The Miller's Daughter (which will be discussed later) is an example of Tennyson's portrayal of his wife.

## The Effects of the Arthurian Legends and Romantic Poetry Upon Tennyson's Treatment of Women

When one studies Tennyson's poems portraying women, one finds that Tennyson was not only influenced in his manner of depicting women by his reverence for his mother, his boyhood environment and his wife, but one finds that Tennyson was influenced greatly by his interest in the Arthurian legends and romantic poetry. Early in life Tennyson became interested in the tales of Arthur, for it has previously been pointed out that Tennyson and his brothers made mimic enterprises of Arthur and his knights when engaging in boyhood play. Tennyson spent much time in reading various versions found in the works of the great romancers. In 1832 Tennyson published his first Arthurian poem, The Lady of Shalott, which was followed in 1842 by the lyric, Lancelot and Guinevere. Later the twelve books were completed with the publication of Balin and Balan.[12]

Malory's writing inspired Tennyson very much. Tennyson's Elaine is supposedly based upon Malory's prose story of Elaine. Another writer whose poems were an inspiration to Tennyson is Cretian de Troyes, a Frenchman. Troyes wrote six great Arthurian poems, among which was Erec and Enid; this is said to be indirectly the source of Tennyson's Geraint Idylls.[13]

Tennyson, a successor of the great romantics---Byron, Shelley,

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[12]Charles W. French, Tennyson's Idylls of the King, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917) pp. 14-15.

[13]Ibid., p. 19.

Keats and Scott---inherited their style, the love of the Middle Ages and of remote lands and times.[14] Whether Tennyson's Idylls are read as simple tales of medieval life, or as allegories which feature the virtues and vices of life in the seductive garb of chivalry, or as a presentation of a noble philosophy of life, with all the vividness and coloring with which art can clothe it, the Idylls must always remain among the most fascinating and suggestive poems and as a supreme illustration of the high perfection of poetic art.[15]

Although Tennyson might have been inspired by the ancient romancers in his treatment of women characters, one notes that the poet has taken the ancient women characters and dressed them in thoughts that reveal not only love but in many instances Tennyson's attitude toward the prevailing problems of his time.

While Tennyson was in Trinity College, he became interested in the poetry of Shelley and Keats, posthumously renowned. Albert C. Baugh says that the effect of Shelley's writing was intermittent and slight, but that of Keats was profound, as is seen in the rich luxuriant texture and rich coloring of some of his poems treating women, especially Mariana, which is often called a connecting link between Keats and the Pre-Raphaelites. In his collection of 1830 including the portraits of fair women, Tennyson never quite rid himself of the feminine ideals that Shelley and Keats' women portraits suggested.[16]

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[14]Charles G. Osgood, The Voice of England, 2nd ed., (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1952) p. 490.

[15]French, op. cit., p. 13.

[16]Albert C. Baugh, A Literary History of England, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1948) p. 1383.

Tennyson's familarity with romantic and classical poetry suggested another medium for the poet to develop his technical powers. Into the re-telling of classical and romantic myths, the poet often infers his own troubles. The gentle elegy often shows Tennyson's "mild-minded melancholy." Tennyson studied human beings as actors in an idyll of his own invention.[17]

The Idylls were, as they still are, Tennyson's greatest experiment in blank verse; and next to Milton's Paradise Lost, they are the finest body of non-dramatic blank verse in the language. The Idylls show the same exquisite grace, the same smoothness, the same variety of pause, and one of the finest features of Tennyson's verse is the flexibility with which it adopts itself to the soft idyllic tone.[18] Malory in simple prose makes his story the expression of chivalry in the Middle Ages. His heroes are true to their own time and place. Tennyson, in melodious blank verse, changes his material freely so as to make it an English production. Tennyson's strong allegorical bent, evinced in the early lyric, was heightened by the analysis of the Arthurian legends. The public is indebted to Tennyson for a restoration of precious Saxon words, too long forgotten, which will hereafter maintain their ground. Tennyson is a resistant to the novelties of slang. It is not probable that another sustained poem will hereafter be written upon the Arthurian legends.[19]

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[17]Fausset, op. cit., pp. 52-53.

[18]Hugh Walker, The Age of Tennyson, (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1919) p. 224.

[19]Edmund C. Stedman, Victorian Poets, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1915) pp. 175-79.

A study of Tennyson's interest in romantic and classical poetry shows that the poet has taken those ancient women characters of the romance writers and dressed them in new garbs of thought. Tennyson's most poetical types of women are not sustained beings, but beautiful shadows, which seem to exist in an atmosphere of beauty. Tennyson's women characters are attributes personified, and love, purity and beauty are the garments that clothe these angelical beings.[20]

Although Tennyson was presumably influenced in his portrayal of women characters by the romantic and classical writers, one finds that Tennyson's pictorial skill shows that the poet had the ability to re-create the ancient women characters and clothe them in garments of thoughts that make them reflect the movements of high-life Victorian society.[21]

When one studies the influences that inspired Tennyson in his portrayal of women characters, one can easily understand how Tennyson so skillfully portrays women as he does. Tennyson had a wealth of resources from which to draw for his portrayal of women characters. Tennyson's father being a learned man, although moody at times, urged his children to write poetry. The family relationships in the Tennyson home were congenial with peace and quietness pervading. In his boyhood, Tennyson admired the beauty of nature, and many of his poems depicting women often have for their setting a scene taken from the poet's boyhood memory. In addition, Tennyson's knowledge of

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[20] Ibid., p. 180.

[21] Osgood, op. cit., p. 493.

romantic and classical poetry and the influence of an ideal wife cannot be omitted when one desires an insight into Tennyson's treatment of women characters. But the greatest influence of all is Tennyson's reverence for his mother whose love, kindness, sympathy and religious devotion prevail throughout Tennyson's poetry, for devotion to his mother is the key to Tennyson's reverence for women.

## CHAPTER III

### WOMEN WHO REVEAL TENNYSON'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Tennyson lived and wrote during a time of national emotion. His age was vividly with him, for he wrote of patriotism, of the proper conception of freedom, of the sad condition of the poor and of woman's position in the onward movement of the world. As a poet, Tennyson felt strongly the vitality of the present in which he lived, but he also brought into the present an immense reverence for the past, and that is one of the strongest foundations for his patriotism.[1] The age governed Tennyson's utterances. The poet watched the growth of democracy without being a democrat. Tennyson saw the changing position of woman. In his patriotic writings, Tennyson tended to emphasize military glory and empire, rather then civic freedom, and he detested extremes of all kinds. Even in the conservatism of his philosophy, he remained the worthy laureate of his beloved queen.[2]

The Industrial Revolution wrought great changes in politics and government in England. There was much greed and corruption among the governing classes and much suffering on the part of the poorer classes. Tennyson does not cry out against the age as being hopelessly bad, but as a poet, Tennyson tries to point out that it is bad. Tennyson denounced evil in all its shapes, for he was a

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[1]Stopford A. Brooke, Tennyson, His Art and Relations to Modern Life, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1903) pp. 33-35.

[2]John W. Bowyer and John L. Brooks, The Victorian Age, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1938) pp. 69-70.

careful observer of the political movements of his time.[3]

In every town, besides the prosperous masters, journeymen and apprentices, there lived a mass of beings physically and morally corrupt. With no police, save watchmen, whose proceedings were a constant theme of mockery, with criminal laws that by their careless ferocity and irregular execution fostered crime, one finds that the poor class lived in constant fear of the law and mob. The degraded system was the result of the antiquated and corrupt framework of government. Alike in central and local affairs, there was no serious attempts made to supply education, sanitation, justice, police, prisons or control of drinking according to the needs of the community. Even after the Industrial Revolution has transformed everything else, the old fabric of government was still regarded as most sacred. The new population suffered a prolonged moral and physical set-back.[4]

England was in a state of unrest. The political power had been wrested from the hands of the territorial aristocracy by the industrial middle classes to finally fall to the masses.[5] Opression and greed were on one hand and rebellion and hatred and open conflict on the other. Tyranny, crime and war menaced the world. How to change the actual condition of human beings into the ideal state

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[3]William C. Gordon, The Social Ideals of Alfred Tennyson, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1906) pp. 127-145.

[4]Dietz, op. cit., pp. 403-405.

[5]Harold Nicolson, Tennyson: Aspects of His Character and Poetry, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1922) p. 2.

was the problem.[6] To this condition Tennyson reacted strongly.

In his treatment of women characters, Tennyson reveals his political philosophy to the reading and thinking world. Tennyson believed strongly that in order to maintain a well-balanced state of government, the monarch must and should be well-loved by the people and in return for the people's devotion, the monarch should give himself and his all to the kingdom that he serves. Tennyson also believed in able officials and pure court, for the poet hated the tyranny of one and the tyranny of many.[7] Tennyson represented the temperate opinions on questions of state, for he cherished the tradition of liberty based upon just laws. The poet thought that the Chartists' and Socialists' agitations in politics should be met, not by universal imprisonment and repression, but by a wide-spread national education, by more of a patriotic and less of a party spirit. From the beginning, Tennyson preached the onward progress of liberty, while steadily opposed to revolutionary actions. Tennyson believed in the gradual betterment of human ills.[8] A study of Tennyson's poems depicting women shows that the poet often resorted to the portrayal of women characters to uncover many of the evils in politics and government. Many of Tennyson's portrayals of women reveal the poet's doctrine of progress, but slow and not always direct or persistent.[9] To Tennyson the despot was the most hateful of

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[6]Gordon, op. cit., p. 108.

[7]Ibid., p. 239.

[8]Hallam Tennyson, op. cit., p. 6.

[9]Raymond M. Alden, Alfred Tennyson: How to Know Him, (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1917) p. 27.

human beings. Tennyson believed that government should function in accordance with the will of the people. Tennyson recognized the necessity for good governmental officials. An ideal statesman, according to Tennyson is best calculated to live and to work up to his standard of excellence---hating chicanery, recklessness, weakness, duplicity and vain-glory. The poet belonged to the party movement, but not to the party revolution. Tennyson accepted change, but he would build upon the bases of the old, for according to Tennyson, reform and destruction are not synonyms. He would advance and protect, "lop away the moulded branch, but protect the tree."[10]

The following poems seem to reveal Tennyson's political philosophy, namely: Rizpah, Godiva, and To the Queen 1851.

RIZPAH

There is no sturdier aspect of Tennyson's mind and teaching than the political aspect---love of country, courage, justice, willingness to serve for a worthy cause, freedom, obedience and reverence. These attributes make Tennyson's prescription for national well-being.[11]

Rizpah is the voice of Tennyson, crying out against the cruel, unsympathetic laws brought to bear upon criminals. Rizpah, a lyrical poem, tells a weird tale of the misery and utter madness of a criminal's mother. Tennyson paints with words several sad pictures of an old mother who in her fierce and trembling way tells a lady

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[10] J. Cuming Walters, Tennyson, Poet, Philosopher, Idealist, (London: Kegan Paul, French Trubner and Company, Ltd., 1893) pp. 90-91.

[11] Edward C. Tainsh, A Study of Tennyson's Works, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1893) p. 98.

who has come to visit her, the story of her son's hanging in chains some years before. The son's death was the death of many under the old laws of England during the nineteenth century. The mother states that her son had been hanged for robbing the mail, although he had not done it in wickedness. The son was the victim of the vile society of the time.

In the following lines Tennyson shows the effects of society upon the boy. Rizpah says:

> But he lived with a lot of wild mates, and they
> never would let him be good.
> They swore that he dare rob the mail, and he
> swore that he would.
> And he took no life, but he took one purse, and when
> all was done
> He flung it among his fellows.[12]

Rizpah reveals that her Willy was not a hard-hearted criminal, for instead of keeping the money for himself, the boy chose rather to give it to his friends.

What a pathetic picture one sees of Rizpah as she tells of her son's hanging! One visualizes a mother on the verge of hysteria, pleading to heartless and unsympathetic lawyers, but to no avail. One can almost sense the feeling of the mother's agony as he reads the following lines:

> I came into the court to the judge and the lawyers.
> I told them my tale, Gods own truth---
> But they kill'd him, they kill'd him for robbing the mail.
> They hanged him in chains for a show.[13]

Rizpah was subjected to further humiliation and shame by having to see her son hanged in chains and in a conspicuous place where passers-by on ships could see the dead boy.

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[12]Rolfe, op. cit., p. 454, ll. 29-32.

[13]Ibid., p. 454, ll. 33-35.

Perhaps one of the saddest, if not the saddest, picture portrayed in the poem, Rizpah, is the picture that relates Rizpah's visit to the prison. The reader visualizes a mother being forced away by the jailer while the cry of her son's voice was ringing in her ears "O mother!" The poem reaches the height of pathos in the lines that tell how Rizpah was seized, beaten and put in jail when she tried to enter her son's cell in order to find out if he had something further to tell her. The following lines tell of Rizpah's cruel treatment:

> They seized me and shut me up; they fasten'd me down
> on my bed,
> They beat me, they beat me
> And then at last they found I had grown so stupid
> And still they let me abroad again---
> but the creatures had worked their will
> Flesh of my flesh was gone,
> but bone of my bone was left.[14]

Tennyson demonstrates further his artistic as well as his poetic ability to portray women when Rizpah tells about her son's burial. Rizpah relates how, when she was last set free, she used to steal out on stormy nights and gather her son's bones from beneath the gallows, until she had gathered every one of them. What a horrible picture the reader conceives of an old mother digging a grave by night in a lonely churchyard that her son might be buried in holy ground! The tale that Rizpah tells of the burial is as terrible as could be imagined, and it is told in plain, simple words which leave the terror piercing and unescapable.

In the last part of the story, Tennyson portrays Rizpah as a humble old woman---one whose agony seemingly has subsided. The dying

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[14] Ibid., p. 455, ll. 46-51.

mother asked that a Bible verse be read to her that tells of God's mercy toward men. Rizpah seems to realize that men's laws are cruel and unjust. Rizpah is Tennyson's plea for sympathy, justice and mercy for the poor. Rizpah says:

> And read me a Bible verse of the Lord's
> goodwill toward men---
> Full of compassion and mercy---long
> suffering.
> Yes, O, yes! For the lawyer is born but
> to murder.[15]

The above lines reveal Tennyson's philosophy toward those who formulate and execute the law. According to Tennyson, political leaders or political officials should be full of compassion, mercy and long-suffering.

Rizpah is a poem that portrays a noble tragedy, not by its story, which is not a story of a hero, but noble by its dreadful pathos and its infinite motherhood. Brooke states that Rizpah's voice is the cry out of the hearts of all mothers of the earth---beasts and birds. According to Brooke, Rizpah is the tragedy of all mothers who have loved and lost.[16]

According to W. J. Rolfe, the Edinburgh Review for October, 1881, refers to Rizpah as a poem is which Tennyson has broken on the world with a new strength and splendor and has achieved a new reputation. Rolfe says that the writer of the article further stated that, were all the rest of Tennyson's works destroyed, Rizpah alone would at once place Tennyson among the first of the

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[15] Ibid., p. 455, ll. 62-64.

[16] Brooke, op. cit., pp. 444-447.

world's poets.[17]

In portraying Rizpah, Tennyson scales the poetic heights of pathos. Rizpah's cries are the cries of mothers the world over--- mothers who plead for love and justice, sympathy and mercy for the poor. Tennyson believed in justice for all.

GODIVA

During the Napoleonic Wars, England incurred a great debt. Parliament enacted laws that levied heavy, burdensome taxes upon the people. The people who bore the brunt of the tax were the poorer classes and the common people.

Although Godiva is one of Tennyson's shortest poems, it is invaluable as an index to the poet's belief in one's willingness to serve his country for a worthy cause, and the poem reveals Tennyson's disbelief in exorbitant taxation.

Godiva, a poem written in blank verse tells the story of the sacrifice made by Lady Godiva on behalf of the people of her husband's city, Coventry.[18]

When one studies the portrayal of Godiva, one is again brought face to face with another one of Tennyson's women characters, who, like Rizpah, displays boldness in the face of adverse circumstances. The poem, Godiva, begins with a plea on the part of the mothers of Coventry for the repeal of the tax that had been levied upon the citizens of the town. When the mothers brought their children,

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[17]Rolfe, op. cit., p. 864.

[18]Arthur A. Baker, A Tennyson Dictionary, (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1912) p. 17.

clamoring, to Lady Godiva, Godiva sought her husband, the Earl of Coventry. After finding the Earl, Godiva told him of the mothers who came to her in tears saying, "If we pay, we starve." Godiva pleaded for the mothers saying to the Earl, "If they pay this tax, they starve." The Earl was amazed at Godiva's taking a stand in behalf of the poor. He asked Godiva this question, "For you would not let your little finger ache for such as these?" Whereupon, Godiva replied, "But I would die, But prove me what it is I would not do." It is at this point in the story that Tennyson demonstrates his genius as a poet possessing supreme artistic ability. One visualizes Godiva alone and in deep thought-weighing the challenge carefully. Godiva has to choose one of the two-love of her countrymen or love of self-respect. After pondering for an hour, Godiva through pity for the poor accepts the challenge to ride naked through the streets of the city.

Before riding forth, Godiva sent a messenger who proclaimed the hard conditions of the time, and who told the people that Godiva would free them from the terrible tax on certain conditions. Godiva told the messenger to sound his trumpet and tell the people:

> Thereforeas they loved her well,
> From then till noon no foot should pace the street,
> No eye look down, she passing, but that all
> Should keep within, door shut and windows barr'd.[19]

After giving her orders to the messenger, Godiva fled to her inmost chamber, and there she undressed herself in haste. Godiva

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[19]Ibid., p. 95, ll. 38-41.

lingered for a while, and then she shook her head, letting her hair fall to her knees. Down the stairs Godiva went. She slid quietly from pillar to pillar until she came to a horse. Godiva mounted the horse and rode forth "clothed on with chastity." Although Godiva had a premonition that various eyes might be staring at her, she rode on until she reached the "Gothic Archway in the wall." There she turned around and rode back, "clothed on with chastity." Only one person peeped, a churl, but before he could realize what was happening, darkness shadowed his eyes. Godiva knew nothing of the churl's peeping.

In the nick-of-time, the great clocks in the towers proclaimed the hour of noon. Godiva went to her chamber, robed and crowned herself and went to meet her husband, the Earl. The Earl repealed the tax. Godiva had succeeded in taking away the tax, "and built herself an everlasting name."

The theme of the poem is so delicate and difficult (nudism), that one sees only a noble woman performing a heroic deed. Tennyson portrays Godiva in imagery which clothes her like a garment of light. It is the moral significance of the scene that fascinates Tennyson---the spectacle of a woman sacrificing herself for the good of the people.[20]

Tennyson so beautifully and so delicately portrays Lady Godiva that one reading the poem need never feel any shame or heat of passion. One sees only the picture of a courageous woman who loves her countrymen. Tennyson was cognizant of the suffering and misery

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[20]Dawson, op. cit., p. 205.

of the poor caused by the burdensome and exorbitant taxes imposed upon them. Tennyson makes known his philosophy that someone must sacrifice if need be for a worthy cause---not through violence or blood-shed, but through loving sacrifice.

TO THE QUEEN 1851

Tennyson's respect and reverence for the Queen influenced the poet's portrayal of women characters greatly. The Queen, according to William C. Gordon, was Tennyson's ideal ruler, and in one of the noblest of verses, Tennyson voiced the inarticulate loyalty of the English people to their well-loved sovereign.[21] Tennyson does not portray the Queen as a woman of external beauty, but as a woman radiating a beautiful personality. In the poem, To the Queen 1851, Tennyson makes known his philosophy concerning a political ruler or leader. Tennyson believed strongly that a monarch should be worthy of reverence---well-loved by the people he serves.

Queen Victoria is symbolic of the noble qualities that enable one to be an ideal ruler or a good statesman---the qualities of kindness, love, purity and trust. In the very first stanza of the poem, Tennyson reveals his philosophy---the monarch must be worthy of reverence. Tennyson writes:

> Revered, beloved---O, you, that hold
> A nobler office upon earth
> Than arms, or power of brain or birth
> Could give the warrior kings of old.[22]

The above lines assert that, according to Tennyson, the Queen is

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[21]Gordon, op. cit., p. 240.

[22]Rolfe, op. cit., p. 1, ll. 1-4.

worthy of reverence. In referring to the Queen's political status, Tennyson maintains that the Queen's office is the noblest on earth---nobler than the office of warrior kings of old who obtained their office through arms, or power of brain or through birth.

Tennyson revered the Queen for her kindness and trust. Note the following lines:

> Take, Madam, this poor book of song
> For tho' the faults were thick as dust
> In vacant chambers, I could trust your kindness
> May you rule us long.[23]

When one reads stanza seven, he visualizes a woman whose life is pure and quiet---a life radiating peace which gave repose to the people whom she ruled. How beautifully Tennyson portrays the Queen in the following lines:

> Her court was pure; her life serence
> God gave her peace; her land reposed;
> A thousand claims to reverence closed
> In her as Mother, Wife and Queen.[24]

Not only does Tennyson speak of the Queen as a woman whose life was pure and peaceful, but she was also a woman whom thousands reverenced as their mother, wife and Queen.

Tennyson refers to the Queen as being a ruler who had the ability to choose wise leaders for her court, for her statesmen were men who knew how to make:

> The bounds of freedom wider yet
> By shaping some august decree
> Which kept her throne unshaken still
> Broad---based upon her people's will.[25]

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[23] Ibid., p. 1, ll. 16-20.

[24] Ibid., p. 1, ll. 25-28.

[25] Ibid., p. 1, ll. 29-32.

According to the above lines, the Queen's court consisted of men who knew how to formulate laws that brought more freedom to the people---laws that held the throne together, for they were laws instituted through the will of the people.

Tennyson recognized the necessity of having able officials (like the Queen) for the moral, spiritual and political are indissolutely united.[26]

Thus one may conclude that the Queen is Tennyson's symbolism of trust, kindness, courtliness, serenity and love and perhaps the epitome of English womanhood. The Queen typifies Tennyson's belief that a monarch should be revered and that he should give his all for people that he serves.

As has been previously pointed out, the nineteenth century was a period of national unrest. The Industrial Revolution ushered in new inventions, new ideas and various political problems. Tennyson does not cry out against the time as being hopeless, but as a poet, Tennyson attempts to point out some of the political evils of the day. Tennyson became a voice, proclaiming to the people of England and to the world, the injustices of the laws as in Rizaph. Godiva is Tennyson's voice putting before the world the inarticulate voice of the poorer classes, protesting the levying of heavy taxes upon them. Then, in the poem, To the Queen 1851, Tennyson seems to offer a solution to the whole matter. Tennyson believed that a government should have a monarch who is worthy of reverence, capable statesmen who will see that government is kept pure, who will extend the

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[26]Gordon, op. cit., p. 240.

bounds of freedom and who will formulate and execute laws based upon the will of the people. This is Tennyson's prescription for a well-balanced government. Therefore, one finds that Tennyson, in his treatment of women reveals many of the political evils of his time, and the women characters in turn reveal Tennyson's philosophy pertinent to the problems.

In the next chapter the writer will prove her second point that Tennyson, in addition to presenting his political views through the women characters in his poetry, also presented his social views through the same medium.

# CHAPTER IV

## WOMEN WHO REVEAL TENNYSON'S SOCIAL VIEWS

It seems natural to expect that the writings of Tennyson will have social as well as political significance. Tennyson maintained that the society that cherishes a low ideal of the worth and mission of woman cannot itself attain a high mental and moral level.[1] To Tennyson, so supreme is the passion of reverence for womanhood, so infinitely high and dear is womanly purity, that it becomes the key to everything noble in human life, for the poet believed that reverence for self go hand in hand.[2]

The one social question that Tennyson treated well as a poet was the question of woman and her relation to modern life. Until the second half of the nineteenth century, women's education was limited to the simple beginnings of learning, to music, and to fancy work. Institutions of higher learning everywhere were closed to women.[3] Tennyson's philosophy of higher education for women can best be expressed in the following words:

> She (woman) must train herself to do the larger work that lies before her, even though she may not be destined to be wife or mother, cultivating her understanding, not her memory only, her imagination in its highest phases, all that is pure, noble and beautiful, rather than mere social accomplishment; then and only then, will men continue to hold her in reverence.[4]

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[1]Gordon, op. cit., pp. 232-34.

[2]Dawson, op. cit., p. 207.

[3]McKinley, op. cit., p. 249.

[4]Gordon, op. cit., p. 101.

Thus, one sees that according to Tennyson's philosophy, a woman must be trained in order that she might develop her highest capacities---whether she be wife or mother. Tennyson's argument is that, if woman be lesser than man, she must be content with a lesser sphere and an inferior place---yet not with a sphere or place without dignity, for woman is not to be the drudge and slave, but a being to whom man may be "yoked" in all noble exercises.[5]

Tennyson further believed and taught that the stability and greatness of a nation lies largely with the home-life of its citizens. Tennyson believed strongly in the sacredness of the family relations. To Tennyson the highest interests of the family are those that involve the sanctity of the marriage bond.[6]

Regarding marriage, Tennyson seems to cherish the idea that the love that binds two souls together is sincere, pure and deep. The obligation of husband to wife and of wife to husband is the obligation imposed by the purest love. The wife and husband must each seek the most complete and perfect development of the noblest powers of the other. The relation is not that of master and servant, but of two God-like souls indissolubly bound together.[7] Therefore, Tennyson believed that sanctity of marriage is one of the essentials of the family and of the progress of society.

Not only does Tennyson reverence the sanctity of family-life

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[5]Walters, op. cit., p. 65.

[6]Hallam Tennyson, op. cit., p. 189.

[7]Gordon, op. cit., p. 84.

and of marriage, but he also exalts the function of motherhood. Motherhood is a part of Tennyson's philosophy of life, for Tennyson asserts that it is only in love and service that the individual can attain his own highest development and can contribute to the progress of the race.[8] According to Tennyson's belief, motherhood is a channel through which love and service flow.

The following poems portray women characters who reveal Tennyson's social views: The Princess, Geraint and Enid, Guinevere, The Miller's Daughter and Elaine.

THE PRINCESS

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, the question of higher education for women became one of the main issues of the day in England. As has been previously stated, Tennyson believed that woman should be allowed to develop to the highest of her capabilities by being trained---whether she be wife or mother. But Tennyson also states that if woman must be content with a lesser sphere than man, woman's place should not be without dignity. Tennyson, however, maintains that woman must not sacrifice motherhood for knowledge. In The Princess Tennyson contrasts the conception of higher education for women with the old idea that women were to be the "drudge and slave" of men.

The Princess has as its theme the emancipation of woman. In the poem Tennyson portrays very vividly three women characters. The women are the Princess Ida, Lady Psyche and Lady Blanche. It is through these women characters that Tennyson seems to reveal his social views pertinent to higher educational opportunities for women.

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8Ibid., p. 235.

For example, it is Lady Psyche who seems to express Tennyson's views for higher education for women. It is interesting to note how skillfully Tennyson has Lady Psyche disclose his views regarding the woman question.

Even Lady Psyche herself is typical of the newer idea that women should be allowed the advantages of higher educational opportunities. Tennyson portrays Lady Psyche as a young woman who seems to reveal the poet's views pertinent to women's past, present and future status. A study of Lady Psyche's portrayal shows her to be an instructor in the Princess' College founded for women only. One visualizes Lady Psyche doling out information to her girl pupils. Lady Psyche began with the beginning of the world, and even then she stated that man crushed his mate. Then Lady Psyche reviewed the legends that told about woman's social status in various countries and during different periods. Especially did Lady Psyche dwell upon woman's social status in great empires---- Persian, Roman and Grecian. She (Lady Psyche) asserted that woman's state in each was unjust. Lady Psyche seems to reveal Tennyson's disbelief in the "little-footed" customs of China; however, she expresses the poet's love and reverence for the respect afforded women by the ideals of chivalry.

Seemingly, Lady Psyche makes known also Tennyson's views regarding women's past social status by referring to the names of great women whose names rank with those of Homer, Plato and Verulam. Lady Psyche mentioned the names of Elizabeth and others in arts of government, Joan of Arc and others in arts of war and Sappo and others in arts of grace. In the portrayal of Lady Psyche, Tenny-

son seems to set forth his belief that women have the ability to make for themselves great names in history if and when they are given educational opportunities.

In revealing Tennyson's views regarding woman's present status, Lady Psyche infers that for six thousand years women had been denied the opportunity of educational advantages. Lady Psyche makes known women's present status in the following lines:

> Six thousand years of fear have made you that
> From which I would redeem you
> No wiser than your mother's household stuff,
> Live chattels, mincers of each other's fame,
> For ever slaves at home and fools abroad.[9]

Lady Psyche also mentioned the fact that there were those who maintained that women's brain could not grasp and hold knowledge like men's, but Lady Psyche made it known that "the brain was like the hand and grew with using."

Lady Psyche discloses Tennyson's future view regarding women's social status by making a future prophecy in which she saw women being elevated to men's equal. The following lines express Tennyson's philosophy:

> ...everywhere
> Two heads in council, two beside the hearth,
> Two in the tangled business of the world,
> Two in the liberal offices of life
> Two plummets dropt for one to sound the abyss
> Of science and the secrets of the mind.[10]

The above lines seem to convey Tennyson's belief that in future years women would be elevated to men's status in the higher pursuit of life.

The Princess who is the heroine in the story also reveals

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[9]Rolfe, op. cit., p. 141, ll. 493-97.

[10]Ibid., p. 124, ll. 155-60.

Tennyson's views pertinent to the woman question. The Princess Ida seems to make known Tennyson's belief that women should "cast and fling" aside "the tricks that make women toys of men," for "knowledge is no longer a fountain seal'd." Tennyson philosophizes in the following lines of The Princess when he says:

> The woman's cause is man's; they rise or sink
> Together, dwarf'd or godlike, bond or free.
> If she be small, slight natured, miserable,
> How shall men grow? let her make herself her own
> To give or keep, to live and learn and be
> All that not harm distinctive womanhood.
> Fill at last she set herself to man
> And so these twain upon the skirts of Time
> Sit side by side, full-summ'd in all their powers.[11]

Although Tennyson does not take a definite stand with either point of view regarding higher education for women, he does point out that knowledge alone is not enough to advance woman's cause, for it is when the Princess admitted love to enter into her heart, that her womanly nature followed its natural bent in caring for the Prince. According to Tennyson's belief, the Princess erred in resorting to complete isolation from men in her efforts to raise women to equality with men through the establishment of a college for women only. The Princess erred also in excluding the natural affections of womanhood by building her hopes on the premise that knowledge was the only thing that would raise women to men's level. These two errors caused the Princess' plans to fail.

One hardly knows how to take Tennyson, for Lady Psyche and the Princess seem to reveal the poet's belief in higher education for women, whereas Lady Blanche seems to reveal that Tennyson's

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[11] Ibid., p. 159, ll. 243-44, 249-50, 56-58, 69, 71-72.

belief was beginning to waver. According to Tennyson's belief as portrayed by Lady Blanche, women had long been satisfied with the little knowledge that they had been taught regarding the Muses and the Castalies. Lady Blanche speaks of them as "gracious days." Seemingly, Lady Blanche expresses Tennyson's regret for the overthrow of the old idea of woman for the hearth in these lines:

> Then came your new friend;
> You began to change
> I saw it and grieved
> You turned your warmer currents all to her
> To me you froze.
> I your old friend and tried, she new in all.[12]

The above lines show that Tennyson foresaw the overthrow of the old idea that women are "slaves of men," and seemingly it is with reluctancy that Tennyson concedes to the newer idea of higher education for women, but one must never forget that the poet reverenced the customs and traditions of the past.

When one reads the conversation between the Princess and the Prince, one learns that Tennyson seems to set forth the idea that a woman may succeed in gaining fame through acquiring knowledge; she still may live in vain, for she will have missed "what every woman counts her due---love, children, happiness." Tennyson reveals the fact that children die and sometimes they bring misery to the mother, but the poet states that "great deeds cannot die." One finds that Tennyson in portraying Lady Psyche and Lady Blanche, weighs carefully the advantages and disadvantages of higher education of women.

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[12] Ibid., p. 138, ll. 279-80, 82, 99.

In The Princess Tennyson seems to have a distinct purpose---the illustration of woman's struggles, aspirations, and her proper sphere in life. Ida is in truth a beautiful and heroic figure, and critics are agreed that The Princess is the most varied and interesting of Tennyson's works with respect to freshness and invention.[13]

The Princess has been freely criticized with satirical condescension for its apparent frivolity in the treatment of a serious subject, but in The Princess Tennyson, seemingly, expresses the true relationship between men and women which embodies the poet's whole philosophy of life---"woman is not undevelopt man."

It seems natural, therefore, from the preceding discussion that Tennyson would reveal his social views pertinent to the woman question through the women characters portrayed in The Princess. One finds that Tennyson believed that women should be trained in order that they might develop to their highest capacities---whether wife or mother.

According to Tennyson's belief, the progress of a nation depends largely upon the sanctity of the home-life of its citizens; therefore, Tennyson cherishes the sacredness of the marriage vows. The poet exalts the function of motherhood and he believed that motherhood should not be sacrificed for learning, for in so doing, woman will miss the thing that counts most in the life of a woman---love, children, happiness. Tennyson further asserts that the relation of man and wife is not that of "servant and slave" but that of two

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[13]Edmund C. Stedman, Victorian Poets, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1903) p. 167.

souls united to form one, each seeking that which is noblest and best in the other.

GUINEVERE

Guinevere's name appears more often in the Idylls than any other woman character---perhaps because of her position as queen and because of the great sin that she wrought on Arthur's court.

In portraying Guinevere, Tennyson, apparently, reveals his belief in great truths of human life. The first of these truths is the poet's belief that sin is the cause of disorder and misery, and until it is extirpated the perfect society cannot be securely established. By sin Tennyson does not mean the desire of existence, but the transgression of law. The second truth that Tennyson sets forth is that life must be according to righteousness if it is to be harmonious and happy, and righteousness consists in conformity to law, for love must move within the bounds of law and must be true to its vows. Guinevere's portrayal discloses the fact that Tennyson emphasized the importance of restraint in regards to the heat of passion, for the greater the genius, the beauty, the power, of those who transgress,the more fatal will be the influence of their sin upon the lives of others. This, indeed, is the lesson that Tennyson seems to reveal---the fall of Lancelot and Guinevere. It was because Guinevere stood so high as Queen, because she was so glorious in womanhood, that her character had power to infect the court.[14]

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[14]Fausset, op. cit., pp. 214-15.

As a character, Guinevere represents the principle of disintegration and death. It is the Queen's sin that corrupted society and that brought about the decline and fall of Arthur's Round Table. Tennyson appears to believe that so long as sin dwells in the heart of man, all efforts to create a perfect state must fail. The poet teaches that the soul of man has power to resist and conquer sin within its own domain, to triumph over sense by steadfast loyalty to the higher nature, and thus to achieve peace and final glory. Tennyson, however, does not set forth any formal doctrine regarding the unfaithfulness of Guinevere as a wife, but the poet does show the evil effects of the Queen's life upon society. Guinevere's life had far-reaching effects upon the lives of Vivien, Modred and Tristram, for their poisonous gossip relative to Lancelot and Guivevere's love-affair spread throughout the court. The intrigues of Lancelot and Guinevere seem to satisfy Tennyson's desire to inform his readers how a lawless passion can corrupt love and mar society.[15]

From the beginning of the story, one feels that there is no true love between the Queen and Arthur, for Arthur was absorbed in the affairs of his kingdom---a man dreaming of fame, whereas Guinevere was dreaming of love. Guinevere erred, however, in her love for Lancelot, for love as has been stated must move within the bounds of law. That is Tennyson's apparent belief.

Guinevere's portrayal also shows Tennyson's disbelief in falsehood and deception. The jealousy that Guinevere displays when Lancelot offered her the diamonds is seemingly that of pretense.

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[15]Henry Van Dyke, The Poetry of Tennyson, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911) pp. 214-17.

One visualizes Guinevere as a woman of falsehood and deception. When Lancelot laid the diamonds in Guinevere's hands she pretended not to know that they were meant for her. Guinevere said:

> ...What are these?
> Diamonds for me! Not for me!
> For her! for your new fancy;
> I pray you; have your joys apart:
> Deck her with these; tell her, she shines me down.
> Nay, she shall not have them.
> Saying which she seized,
> Flung, them down, they flash'd and smote the stream.[16]

If Guinevere had been sincere in her love for Lancelot, perhaps she would not have destroyed the diamonds that Lancelot had fought so hard to win.

A feeling of remorse creeps into one's heart as one reads of Guinevere's repentance and of Arthur's forgiveness to the Queen for the grave sin that she had committed. The portrayal of Guinevere at this point in the story, seemingly, reveals Tennyson's belief that false love brings disgrace and shame, not only to the person who practices deception in love but to those who have to suffer the evil effects of false love. After Guinevere and Lancelot departed, the Queen entered a nunnery. For weeks Guinevere neither mixed with the nuns nor would she tell her name. She was afraid that the mention of her name would make public her sin, for the sin that she had committed weighed heavily upon her heart. Sad, indeed, is the picture that Tennyson paints of Guinevere when Arthur arrived at the nunnery.

When Arthur reiterated to Guinevere her shameful love for

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[16]Rolfe, op. cit., pp. 397-98, ll. 1204-05, 1208-09, 1225, 1227.

Lancelot, the Queen realized her mistake, but, alas, it was too late. Guinevere desired someone to tell the king that she loved him "tho' so late." and she became aware of her duty as a wife and as a Queen. Guinevere expresses her attitude when she remarked:

> It was my duty to have loved the highest;
> It surely was my profit had I known.[17]

One visualizes Guinevere as a penitent woman, for she is cognizant of the great mistake that she has made. Through Guinevere Tennyson reveals the evil effects of an unfaithful wife's life---shame and disgrace to herself and society.

According to E. C. Stedman, Tennyson's portrayal of Guinevere elevates one to the heights of pathos, and yet she stands forth in beauty and love.[18]

The following lines presumably reveal Tennyson's philosophy regarding woman's real character in life---her station in life is taken to be pure, and, when it is not pure, it is like a new disease that creeps in without warning and poisons the lives of men and boys. Tennyson states:

> She like a new disease unknown to men
> Creeps, no precaution used, among the crowd
> Makes wicked lightning of her eyes and saps
> The fealty of our friends, and stirs the pulse
> With devil's leaps and poisons half the young.[19]

Thus, one finds that Tennyson, in his portrayal of Guinevere,

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[17] Ibid., p. 442, ll. 652-63.

[18] Stedman, op. cit., p. 178.

[19] Rolfe, op. cit., p. 441, ll. 514-19.

reveals his great social truths---that one must not let passion overrule the soul, and that the sin of one woman can bring shame, disgrace and degradation not only to her self but to society in general.

GERAINT AND ENID

Through the character, Enid, in the Idylls of the King Tennyson presumably reveals his views regarding a faithful wife. Enid seems to express Tennyson's belief that a wife should render patient, tender and uncomplaining obedience to her husband.[20] According to Tennyson's portrayal of Enid, a wife should be true to her marriage vows even though she has to endure hardships and sometimes a husband's jealousy, for love conquers all.

Enid is the story of a woman, sweet and true and steadfast down to the very bottom of her heart, joined to a man who is exacting and suspicious. Geraint wakened in the morning to find his wife weeping, and he leaped at once to the conclusion that she is false. Geraint judged by the sense and not by the soul. But Enid loved him too well even to defend herself against him. Enid obeyed Geraint's harsh commands and submitted to his heavy, stupid tests. Yet even in her obedience she distinguished between the sense and love. As long as there is no danger, Enid rides before Geraint in silence to do as he told her to do, but when she saw the robbers waiting in

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[20]Edward C. Tainsh, A Study of the Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson, (London: The Macmillan Company, 1893) p. 208.

ambush she turned back to warn Geraint.[21] Enid said:

> I needs must disobey him for his good;
> How should I dare obey him to his harm?
> Needs must I speak, and tho' he kill me for it
> I save a life dearer to me than mine.[22]

The above lines reveal Enid's love for Geraint. Enid loved Geraint to the extent that she was willing to risk her life in order to save her husband's life.

Enid and Geraint moved on through many perils and adventures, she (Enid) a bright, clear, steady star, Geraint like a dull, smouldering, smoky fire, until at last Enid's loyalty conquers Geraint's jealousy and he sees that it is better to trust than to doubt. Geraint realized that a pure woman's love has the power to vindicate its own honour against the world, and the right to claim an absolute and unquestioning confidence. Enid portrays Tennyson's belief that the soul is victorious over sense.[23]

According to Raymond M. Alden, Enid is a variation of a medieval theme sometimes called the Griselda motif---a tested wife, nobly patient under mistreatment and so winning a double portion of her husband's love. The story of Enid carries one back into the Middle Ages. Enid is the type of meek and obedient womanhood toward which no modern woman aspires. Enid is one of Tennyson's loveliest representatives.[24]

When one studies the portrayal of Enid as contrasted with that

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[21]Van Dyke, op. cit., pp. 201-202.

[22]Rolfe, op. cit., p. 346, ll. 135-38.

[23]Van Dyke, op. cit., p. 202.

[24]Alden, op. cit., p. 133.

of Geraint, one finds two very distinct and different personalities. Geraint is the haughty male, who puts his "simple, noble natured" wife's loyalty to various stupid but highly decorative tests. Geraint acts like a knightly boor, but Enid suffers all patiently, and like the beaten dog, only loves her master the more. The conclusion of the poem is an inverted Princess.[25]

Tennyson gives a beautiful portrayal of Enid in the closing lines of the poem. This portrayal shows Tennyson's belief that a true and faithful wife's love can conquer jealousy, and that people will respect a true wife. The following lines bear out the above statement:

> They call'd him the great prince and man of men
> But Enid, whom her ladies loved to call
> Enid the Fair, a grateful people named
> Enid the Good; and in their hall arose
> The cry of children, nor did he doubt her more
> But rested in her fealty till he crown'd
> A happy life with a fair death.[26]

Thus, one finds that there seems to be about Enid a womanliness and a beauty of character that gives her a radiant personality. All through the story, one finds that Enid's tender, meek obedience and sweet dogged courage make such sunshine and shower that the heart of the reader melts between smiles and tears. Enid appears to be Tennyson's incarnation of the true or faithful wife---tender, uncomplaining and happy when rendering services to her husband. Therein lies Tennyson's philosophy of the duty of a faithful wife.[27]

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[25]Fausset, op. cit., pp. 207-208.

[26]Rolfe, op. cit., p. 257, ll. 960-67.

[27]Tainsh, op. cit., p. 208.

THE MILLER'S DAUGHTER

Another predominant social view that is perhaps one of Tennyson's strongest is his view on domestic life, for the poet apparently believed that it is in married love that the noblest fruit of love is found. Tennyson seems to think that it is in marriage that the divinest dreams of love are realized.[28]

Tennyson, presumably, maintains that before true marriage can be consummated, God must have "wrought two spirits to one equal mind."[29] This seems to be Tennyson's philosophy for a successful marriage and happy family relations.

Perhaps no other writer has ever given to the world pictures of English home and family-life more original and beautiful in form than that given by Tennyson in the poem, The Miller's Daughter. In portraying the miller's daughter, Tennyson does not dwell at length on the daughter's external beauty, but chooses rather to emphasize the noble attributes of love and kindness that ruled her heart.

Tennyson portrays the miller's daughter in her maidenhood as a charming young woman, beautiful in form with lovely eyes that never lost their glow. One notes the attribute of beauty that pervades. Another lovely picture that Tennyson paints of the miller's daughter is a picture of her wedding. The maid was gay and pensive as she walked down the aisle with her bridal flowers and arm in arm with her groom.

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[28]Dawson, op. cit., p. 207.

[29]Johnson, op. cit., p. 39.

As the years passed, one finds that the miller's daughter and her husband grew fonder of each other. Time seemed to wind a garland around each other's heart. Tennyson seems to assert that true married love grows fonder and dearer as the years go by.

Tennyson philosophizes regarding marriage based upon true love in the following lines:

> Love that has us in the net
> Can he pass, and we forget?
> Love is hurt with jar and fret;
> Love is made a vague regret;
> Eyes with idle tears are wet;
> Idle habit links us yet
> What is love? for we forget
> Ah no! no! [30]

Presumably, Tennyson believed that marriage founded upon true love will endure the many jars and frets of this life, and even if the wife has to shed a few tears, love will remain as the connecting link between the husband and wife. When sorrow came into the family through the loss of a dear one, the loss brought pain to both the husband and wife, but the loss of the dear one made the love between the miller's daughter and her husband dearer.

One of the most touching parts of the story is the part that tells of the comfort that comes to those whose marriage is founded upon love. The kiss and other little tokens of love are "weak symbols of bliss." Tennyson's philosophy regarding marriage can be summed up in the following lines:

> God bless thee, dear---who wrought
> Two spirits to one equal mind
> With blessings beyond hope or thought
> With blessings no word can find.[31]

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[30] Rolfe, op. cit., p. 37, ll. 203-204; 209-214.

[31] Ibid., p. 38, ll. 243-47.

Thus, one finds that Tennyson seems to believe that the marriage wrought by God will endure and that the family will enjoy many blessings beyond all hope, thought or word.

In the poem, The Miller's Daughter, Tennyson demonstrates his ability to capture the spirit of rural England. The poem seems to reveal Tennyson's belief in the sincerity and endurance of true married love. There is more humanity with less image and drapery and a closer adherence to truth. Tennyson appears to stress the moral and spiritual traits of character more than the outward portrayal of the characters. The poet addresses himself more to the heart and less to the eye. Critics are agreed that the portrayal of the miller's daughter shows that Tennyson had advanced both in his mastery of art and in his comprehension of life.[32]

LANCELOT AND ELAINE

The portrayal of Elaine reveals Tennyson's seeming belief in the virgin, purity of womanhood. The conflict in the poem is between a pure, virgin love and a guilty passion. The maid of Astolot is the lily of womanhood, and in her simplicity and singleness of heart, she typifies pure love.[33]

Elaine, the "Lily Maid of Astolot," is presumably Tennyson's loveliest fantasy of womanhood, characterless, but pure, faithful in love and infinitely pathetic. Tennyson seems to have expended his faultless artistry on Elaine as on no other character in the Idylls.[34]

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[32] Fausset, op. cit., p. 109.

[33] Van Dyke, op. cit., p. 204.

[34] Fausset, op. cit., p. 209.

In portraying Elaine, Tennyson has painted with words several vivid pictures of Elaine that show the poet's belief in the virgin purity of womanhood. Fascinating, indeed, is the picture that Tennyson paints of Elaine as she visits the cave where Lancelot lay wounded in a poplar grove. The picture reveals Elaine's passionate but innocent love for Lancelot. Elaine lavished her love and care on Lancelot until she nursed him back to health. Elaine's love is symbolic of Tennyson's belief in pure love.

W. J. Rolfe states that Stopford Brooke once remarked that Elaine rises to the very verge of innocent maidenliness in passionate love, but she does not go over the verge, and to be on the verge and not pass beyond it is the very peak of innocent girlhood when seized by overmastering love. It was as difficult to represent Elaine as to represent Juliet. Tennyson has succeeded well where Shakespeare succeeded beautifully.[35]

Tennyson carries the reader's mind to the heights of pathos in his portrayal of Elaine's sickness and death. One sees a sad and forlorn maid as Elaine stripped the case from Lancelot's shield and gave it to him, and when Lancelot rode away without even looking up to bid Elaine good-bye, the maid fled to her tower. On her sick bed Elaine composed a song of "Love and Death." Elaine sang the song softly and gently. Before dying Elaine dictated a letter to her brother. The letter was a letter of love to Lancelot. Elaine's love is symbolic of Tennyson's belief in true and pure love.

Anyone reading the story of Elaine's portrayal finds that the

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[35]Rolfe, op. cit., p. 856.

pictures depicting the maid's innocent and passionate love for Lancelot touch the reader's heart with more tender care, sympathy and love than any other woman portrayed in the Idylls. Never once does Elaine conceal her love for Lancelot, and even when she begs to follow Lancelot, she is still an innocent young girl. As one reads the story, the allegorical element is completely forgotten, for the reader loses himself in the human story---the story of a maiden who loves passionately and loses. Seemingly, Elaine is Tennyson's ideal woman, for she embodies all that is purest and best in womanhood.

A study of the poems, The Princess, Guinevere, Geraint and Enid, The Miller's Daughter and Elaine reveals Tennyson's social views. The poem, The Princess expresses Tennyson's belief in the emancipation of women through education. Tennyson cherished motherhood, for he believed that women should not sacrifice motherhood for knowledge. The portrayal of Guinevere reveals Tennyson's abhorrence of the unfaithful wife, for she is not only detrimental to herself but to society. The poem, Enid shows that Tennyson cherished the sanctity of the marriage vows. Enid represents the faithful wife. Tennyson believed that the faithful wife should never falter in her love and services to her husband. If one desires an insight into Tennyson's belief in the purity of womanhood, the innocence of maidenhood and pure love, one should read the poem, Elaine.

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study has been an attempt to show that Tennyson revealed through the portrayal of the women in his poetry his political and social views pertinent to the problems of his day. Being keenly sensitive to the various movements of his time, the poet has written poems regarding law and government, marriage, love and woman's status and mission in society.

A study of Tennyson's poetry revealed that the poet painted with words many beautiful and vivid pictures of various types of women---women of wondrous beauty, love, vice, and purity. Using his women characters as media for his ideas, Tennyson in his poetry revealed definite information concerning the poet's social and political philosophy. Investigation of the poems analyzed in this study showed that Tennyson not only represented his personal views but reflected the thinking of the Victorian Age.

The poem, To the Queen in 1851 revealed Tennyson's philosophy regarding a ruler and statesman. Tennyson believed that a monarch should be worthy of respect and reverence---well-loved by the people. The monarch should in return give his all for the people that he serves. According to Tennyson, statesmen should be broad-minded, men who are capable of making the "bounds of freedom wider." The poems, Rizpah and Godiva showed Tennyson's views relative to law. Tennyson believed in just laws for all---laws based upon the will of the people. Rizpah is the poet's voice making known to the world the injustice meted the poor under the laws of England. The poem, Godiva showed Tennyson's disapproval of exorbitant taxation.

Tennyson maintained that whenever heavy taxes are imposed upon people, the poor suffer.

A study of the poems, The Princess, Geraint and Enid, Guinevere, The Miller's Daughter and Lancelot and Elaine revealed Tennyson's social views. The poem, The Princess revealed Tennyson's views pertinent to the woman question. Tennyson believed that women should be allowed educational opportunities, but women should not sacrifice motherhood for knowledge. According to Tennyson's belief, if women sacrifice motherhood for learning, they will have missed what every woman counts her due---love, children, happiness. Guinevere revealed the poet's attitude toward the unfaithful wife. Tennyson believed that an unfaithful wife brings shame and disgrace not only to herself but to society in general. An unfaithful wife, according to Tennyson, is like a "new disease that creeps in without warning" and destroys the lives of men and youths. A study of the poem, Geraint and Enid revealed Tennyson's views regarding the faithful wife.

Tennyson believed that a wife should render kind, loving and uncomplaining services to her husband. She should be true to her marriage vows even though she has to endure hardships. Anyone desiring to know Tennyson's views on marriage should read the poem The Miller's Daughter. The poem expresses Tennyson's belief that the marriage "wrought by God" brings joy and happiness to both the husband and wife. The poem also showed that Tennyson believed that true marriage is the channel through which the noblest fruit of love can be realized. Through the portrayal of Elaine in the poem Lancelot and Elaine the study showed Tennyson's view relative to pure love. The poet believed in the purity of womanhood and the

virgin innocence of maidenhood. According to Tennyson, love must be pure.

In his treatment of women characters, Tennyson rendered to the world a distinct social service by portraying with clearness, beauty and power the time in which he lived. Anyone who studies the poems mentioned in this study, has at hand data from which one can learn Tennyson's political and social views pertinent to the time in which the poet lived and wrote.

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